

## **Program Description:** Youth and School Programs

### **REBEL and REBEL 2**

REBEL and REBEL 2 establish a continuum of tobacco prevention programming for New Jersey youth, ages eleven through eighteen.

REBEL is a statewide, youth empowerment tobacco prevention model. REBEL targets New Jersey youth ages fourteen through eighteen. REBEL is implemented at both the county and school- based levels. The county Youth Coordinator and school- based advisors work collaboratively to change social norms in both the community and school environment. Each county agency maintains a funded, full-time Youth Coordinator responsible for recruiting community youth that actively participate and maintain membership and involvement in REBEL. Each Youth Coordinator aids his/her REBEL members in successfully implementing county- wide tobacco prevention activities. Each school maintains a funded school-based advisor that aids members in successfully implementing tobacco prevention activities within their school. Both the county Youth Coordinator and the school- based advisor are expected to hold monthly or bi-monthly meetings with their members and to attend statewide REBEL events. There are approximately 2,200 active REBEL members supported by 100 funded NJ high schools and twenty-one county REBEL chapters.

A key component of youth empowerment is the REBEL Statewide Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The YAB is a youth leadership board comprised of two elected representatives from each of the twenty-one counties. These youth leaders are the “voice” of REBEL and serve as liaisons between the county REBEL members and NJDHSS. The forty-two member board meets at least twice a year to create, plan, guide, and discuss the future directions of the program.

The YAB is further divided into the Council of Nine. The YAB Council of Nine members are a hierarchy of the YAB. They are nine elected representatives selected from the forty-two member Youth Advisory Board with each member representing one of the nine regions of NJ. Council of Nine members serve as the liaisons between the forty-two YAB members and NJDHSS. The Council of Nine ensures that the YAB committee plans and initiatives are implemented.

REBEL 2 is a middle-school, curriculum based, peer education model; REBEL 2 is an in-school program that focuses on tobacco education and healthy lifestyle choices and in turn, educates elementary students about the dangers of tobacco. The program provides a structured, written curriculum that enables middle school students to cross mentor elementary school students in their respective districts. The curriculum provides students with age-appropriate tobacco information and life skills. Each REBEL 2 school maintains a funded faculty member that is responsible for recruiting youth that actively participate and maintain membership in REBEL2.

## REBEL U

REBEL U is a statewide, empowerment model that targets NJ young adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. REBEL U is designed to achieve three primary goals: 1) to provide a bridge for REBEL students that have graduated from high school that allows them to continue their tobacco advocacy work as young adults, 2) to train and create student leaders that will educate, facilitate, and mentor high school REBEL students at statewide events (“Event ROCS”), and 3) to train and empower college students attending NJ colleges/universities to educate fellow peers about the dangers of tobacco and to support and advocate for non-smoking social norms on their campuses (“Campus ROCS”).

### Philosophical Foundation

REBEL represents youth empowerment in the context of tobacco control. Youth and School Programs define **youth empowerment** as:

*“...a process whereby young people gain ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change at a higher level than previously allowed or thought possible. Youth empowerment may take the form of youth-led media, youth rights, or meaningful student involvement, among other methods. It exists for the purpose of promoting civic engagement, participatory democracy, and popular education”<sup>1</sup>.*

This relationship and interaction of the local community and school groups produces the outcome of empowerment.<sup>2</sup> Key factors that influence this outcome are: group structure, climate, and dynamics, parental involvement, and the skill and interaction of the adult coordinator.<sup>3</sup> These factors, functioning coordinately, generally produce a change in the student, the group, and the community.<sup>3</sup>

REBEL aims to produce a youth empowerment movement that is youth-driven and adult-supported.<sup>3</sup> This, in its most simplistic form, means that county youth members lead, develop, pursue, and implement the statewide and local goals of the program. The adult coordinator works collaboratively with the youth to assist and advise them on how to best accomplish these goals.

### Programmatic Implications

Over the last five years, the community based program has experienced increased success with the addition of the school based program. As the Youth and Schools Programs Unit moves into a 3 year plan, CTCP’s strategic planning outcomes have indicated greater successes are attainable if the two branches of the program can increase coordination and work toward a well-defined, synergistic relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

<sup>2</sup> Literature Review for American Legacy Foundations Statewide Youth Movement Against Tobacco Use Report, 2000  
[www.americanlegacy.org](http://www.americanlegacy.org)

<sup>3</sup> Lesko, Wendy. *Activism 2000 Project*, 1998